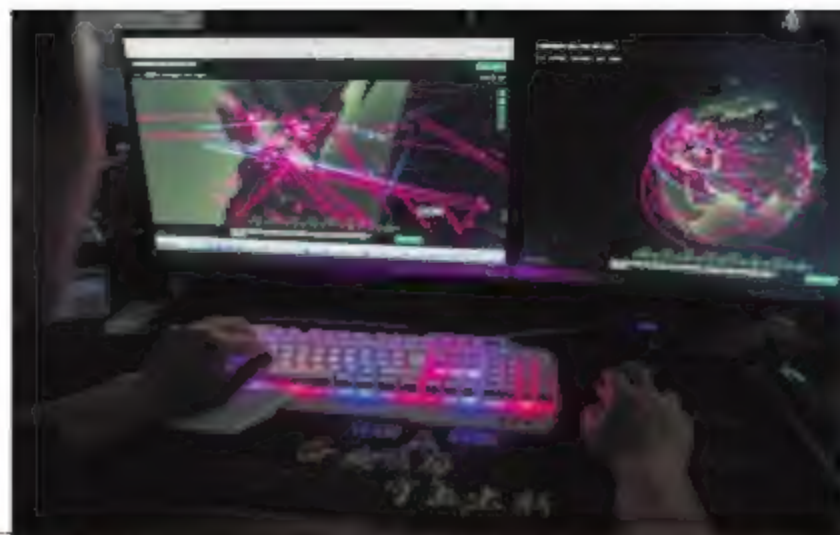




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BENGALURU • SUNDAY • APRIL 07, 2024 • ₹12.00 • PAGES 28 • LATE CITY EDITION



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'CHINA COULD ABUSE AI TO SWING OUTCOME IN POLL-BOUND INDIA'
Warning by Microsoft comes as India and South Korea go to polls this month and the US in November. North Korea could add to trouble

BEIJING BID TO SOW DIVISION, SAYS MICROSOFT
China is increasingly experimenting in memes, videos and audio generated by artificial intelligence to further its interests, said Clint Watts, GM, Microsoft Threat Analysis Center. It has been increasingly using the AI-content in the US to influence and sow division, he said. But for the time being, China's efforts will not have impact on poll outcome, he added

NORTH KOREA IS STEALING CRYPTOS
North Korea continues to prioritise theft of crypto currency for revenue to fund its space, missile and nuclear programmes, Watts said. Its attack is focused on the US, South Korea and Japan
The good news is there is not much evidence to show that China's efforts have been successful in swaying public opinion in the US

\$3BN
OF CRYPTOS HAVE BEEN STOLEN BY NORTH KOREA SINCE 2017, U.N. SAYS

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DROUGHT RELIEF TO K'TAKA

CENTRE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR FUND DELAY: NIRMALA

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

UNION Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday said the delay in the release of central grants to Karnataka to tackle drought is not intentional as vetting of reports by the departments concerned takes time.

She, however, stated that the Centre is not responsible for the delay. During his recent visit to the state, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said the state government caused a delay in submission of its memorandum for



central aid. "Karnataka submitted a memorandum in October 2023, following which an Inter-Ministerial Central Team (IMCT) conducted an assessment. The assessment report went to the Agriculture Ministry in November. They submitted

their report to the sub-committee of the National Executive Committee which placed it before the High-Level Committee (HLC). But on March 28, 2024, it was written to the ECI to convene the HLC meeting to approve the report in view of the Model Code of Conduct for LS polls," she said.

The Congress government, which approached the SC, seeking its direction to the Centre to release funds, is trying to set a narrative that the Union government is averse to the state in terms of tax devolution. **P4**

Man offers finger to Kali for Modi's win

SUBHASH CHANDRA NS @Karwar

A 50-YEAR-old man from Karwar chopped off his index finger on Saturday and offered it to Goddess Kali, praying for the victory of Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led BJP in the Lok Sabha elections.

This incident has not only shocked locals, but also BJP leaders, who have appealed to the people not to indulge in such acts.

Arun Vernekar, a resident of Sonarwada in Karwar, who did this act, said, "I prayed to Kali Matha for Modi's re-election as PM, and as an offering, I offered my index finger to the goddess. Modi is my leader." **P6**

UNDISCLOSED CPM BANK A/C FROZEN

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Kochi

EVEN as Opposition parties accuse the Central agencies of trying to cripple their electioneering at the behest of the BJP, the Income Tax department (I-T) on Saturday froze a bank account of the CPM which has ₹4.8 crore.

The account of the CPM Thrissur district committee in a nationalised bank caught the attention of I-T investigators when ₹1 crore was recently withdrawn from it. The action was initiated by an I-T team tasked with monitoring the flow of black money in the backdrop of the LS polls.

According to a tax official, the I-T returns of the party had not mentioned the account. Meanwhile, the CPM state leadership condemned

the action, alleging that the I-T department froze the account without prior notice or seeking any explanation.

The account has been frozen after an unexpected interrogation of CPM Thrissur district secretary M M Varghese by the I-T sleuths at the Enforcement Directorate office in Kochi on Friday, where he was being questioned in connection with the Karuvannur Service Coop Bank scam.

"The bank account, opened in 1998, is in the name of the CPM Thrissur district committee. Upon examining the party's I-T returns, we discovered that the details of this bank account were not disclosed. Currently, there is ₹4.8 crore in the account. We froze the account and initiated a probe," stated an I-T official.

Fight gets shriller as LS campaign picks up pace

Muslim League imprint in Cong manifesto: PM

NAMITA BAIJAI @Lucknow

WHILE underscoring the futility of INDIA bloc in Uttar Pradesh and calling it a flopped film of two boys (Rahul Gandhi and Akhilesh Yadav) of 2017 re-released in 2024, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday launched a blistering attack on the Congress in Saharanpur, charging that its manifesto released a day earlier had imprint of the erstwhile Muslim League.

"The Congress manifesto completely bears the imprint of the Muslim League of the days of the freedom struggle. Its every page reeks of breaking India into pieces. And whatever part of the Congress is left is completely dominated by the leftists. Such a party cannot take India forward in the 21st century," he said, adding the poll statement of the Congress showed it was completely cut off from the hopes and aspirations of today's India.

"On the other hand, we have worked without discrimination. Saturation coverage of our welfare schemes has been our mantra. We want the welfare initiatives to reach every section, every caste and everyone without discrimination. This is true secularism," he added.

In his pushback, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh accused the BJP of practising the "politics of divisiveness". He recalled that Jan Sangh founder Syama Prasad Mookerjee had joined a coalition government in Bengal with the Muslim League in the early 1940s.

Hurling a barb at the SP, the PM said: "Look at the Samajwadi Party... They are changing their candidates every hour." The SP changed as many as 17 candidates after giving tickets to them on seven seats of western UP.

Democratic institutions being destroyed: Sonia

RAJESH ASNANI @Jaipur

IN its first mega show in Rajasthan, Congress biggies Sonia Gandhi, Mallikarjuna Kharge and Priyanka Gandhi launched a scathing attack against the BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi at a massive rally here to introduce the party's manifesto to the public.

Sonia said the country under Modi's rule has been pushed towards dictatorship. She accused the Modi government of instilling fear in the country's democratic institutions, adding the PM believes he is above the nation.

The country's freedom is not the product of the new leadership at the top but has been achieved through the struggles and sacrifices of their forefathers, she said, adding: "After so many years, the great light has dimmed. The injustice of darkness has increased all around. Our resolve should be to fight against this and seek the light of justice." Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge accused Modi of confusing the people and failing to deliver. "You have not done anything for the country... We are giving an account of 55 years... You only abuse Congress and the Gandhi family," he claimed.

Priyanka Gandhi criticised the BJP's association with corrupt individuals and accused it of prioritising industrialists over the welfare of the people. "All the schemes are for big industrialists. They say they will give a 5 kg ration but will not provide employment, will not let your children stand on their feet," she charged. Priyanka also pointed out that though the BJP is inducting corrupt leaders from all parties, no one is even questioning it.

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EXPRESS READ

3 B'uru medics test positive for cholera

BENGALURU: Three of the 47 students of Bangalore Medical College and Research Institute (BMCRI) Girls' Hostel, who were admitted to Victoria Hospital on Friday after reporting symptoms of diarrhea and dehydration, have tested positive for cholera. **P3**

WITH THIS ISSUE

WEB OF SLAVERY

HIRING

PLUS 12 PAGES

MAGAZINE

WHAT'S TRENDING

Aerial view: Hit wave strikes IPL season with 6

SWAROOP SWAMINATHAN @Chennai

THE ongoing edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL) is more than two weeks old. One of the patterns to have emerged from the 17th iteration is that, as it stands, the league is on course to see a new record for sixes in a single year. After Friday night's match between Sunrisers Hyderabad and Chennai Super Kings, the 10 teams combined had managed 326 maximums for an average of 18 per match. You extrapolate that over the 74 games and they are on course for 1332, comfortably eclipsing the previous best of 1124 in 2023 (74 matches).

What has changed when compared to last year — any of the previous years, really — is that the teams are clearing the boundary cushions at an unprecedented rate. As it stands, they are hitting at least one six every 2.1 overs, comfortably the best such metric in the history of the league. In 2023, it was one every 2.3 overs. In 2022, it was one hit over the fence every 16.2 deliveries.

Why is this the case? There are various reasons for this but the short answer is that uncapped Indian batters are comfortable in taking the aerial route (out of the top 25 leading six-hitters this year, four are uncapped Indians who have honed their skills in domestic T20 cricket). The other pronounced rationale behind this sort of six-hitting lies in the teams (and players) valuing the art of boundaries: 80% of all T20 matches are won by teams who hit more boundaries. Even among the boundaries, sides who hit more sixes typically tend to win more matches. Dan Weston, who worked with Punjab Kings during the mega auction in 2022, explained: "This year, Kolkata have so far hit an almost equal number of fours and sixes (45 sixes and 44 fours). We are starting to see the combination of the additional depth that the impact player provides to domestic players coming in. Teams are realising that the extra depth allows them to play more attacking cricket." All of this comes with one caveat. With three-fourths of the season to go, there may be a regression to the mean. The next few weeks will reveal whether this is the beginning of another evolution. **MORE ON P15**

Sunday Special



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